

To the Members of the California State Senate:

I am returning Senate Bill 351 without my signature.

Since the primary responsibility for first responder training and exercises resides with local governments, this bill runs counter to the established processes and systems in place that allow local governments to prioritize training and exercises within their own jurisdiction, and it impedes the State's ability to fairly and equitably support those needs. It is important to note that San Bernardino County has decided to use their federal Homeland Security funding to conduct a mass casualty exercise with local first responders and the State that will be held in November 2006. The county also held a Mountain Area Safety Task Force exercise in August of 2006 that included first responders.

The Office of Emergency Services follows federal government regulations for the use of dedicated grant funding specifically designed to plan for and train personnel in hazardous material incident response. OES will continue to work with the Local Emergency Planning Committees and the counties to coordinate and support training and exercises that will prepare local governments to effectively and safely respond to hazardous material incidents.

I applaud San Bernardino's continuing efforts to bolster their emergency response capability and improve public safety. However, since no additional statutory authority is needed in this area, this bill is unnecessary.

For these reasons I am unable to sign this bill.

Sincerely,

Arnold Schwarzenegger